

WASHINGTON, DC – This week, health advocates from around the country are participating in a national awareness campaign to bring attention to and educate their communities about prevention of hepatitis B through testing and vaccination. In order to break the silence surrounding this deadly disease and bring awareness to the American people, Rep. Mike Honda (CA-15), Rep. Edolphus Towns (NY-10), and Rep. Charlie Dent (PA-15) introduced H. Res. 366, Supporting the Goals and Ideals of National Hepatitis B Awareness Week.

The numbers are startling. In the United States, 12 million people (1 out of 20) have been infected at some time in their lives with the hepatitis B virus, more than one million people in the U.S. have developed chronic hepatitis B infection, and more than 5,000 Americans die from hepatitis B-related liver complications each year. Hepatitis B is 100 times more infectious than HIV. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are most disproportionately affected by chronic hepatitis B, accounting for more than half of the chronic hepatitis B cases and half of the deaths resulting from chronic hepatitis B infection in the United States. Although hepatitis B immunizations are now routinely given to adolescents, many adults, particularly in immigrant populations, remain vulnerable to the disease. Hepatitis B costs our country \$700 million every year.

"Hepatitis B diagnosis does not have to be a death sentence," says Congressman Honda. "The tools to combat this disease, vaccination, early diagnosis, and treatments, as well as education, are available to us." During National Hepatitis B Awareness Week, events will be held across the United States to raise awareness about hepatitis B, educate patients and their physicians about improved methods of treatment and prevention, and open the dialogue within communities about how to stop the transmission of this virus. Congressman Honda participated in a testing day in San Francisco along with Mayor Gavin Newsom in 2006.